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attempting to solve them, we shall simply repeat the experiments of the Old World, or, rising to nobler modes, shall illustrate some deeper adaptation of the Gospel to human society and to human thought, it remains for the coming century to show.

J. L. DIMAN.

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## ART. II. — POLITICS IN AMERICA, 1776-1876.

WHEN the Continental Congress met in 1774, few persons in the Colonies perceived that the ties to the mother country were about to be severed, and few, if any, were republicans in theory, or contemplated a "revolution" in the political system. The desire for independence was developed during 1775, and the question as to the form of government to be adopted came up by consequence. It presented no real difficulty. The political organization of some of the Colonies was such already that there were no signs of dependence except the arms and flag, the form of writs, and a responsibility to the Lords of Trade which sat very lightly upon them. Necessary changes being made in these respects, those Colonies stood as complete republics. The others conformed to this model.

In bringing about these changes great interest was developed in political speculations, an interest which found its first direction from Paine's "Common Sense," and was sustained by diligent reading of Burgh's "Political Disquisitions," and Mrs. Macaulay's "History of England." The same speculations continued to be favorite subjects of discussion for twenty-five years afterwards. The journals of the time were largely made up of long essays by writers with fanciful *noms de plume*, who discussed no simple matters of detail, but the fundamental principles of politics and government. The method of treatment was not historical, unless we must except crude and erroneous generalizations on classical history, and it seemed to be believed that the colonial history of this country was especially unfit to furnish guidance for the subsequent period; but the disquisitions in question pursued an *apriori* method, starting from the broadest and most abstract assumptions. The same method

has marked American political philosophy, so far as there has been any such thing, ever since. It is very much easier than the method which requires a laborious study of history.

The natural effect of the war, but still more of the doctrines in regard to liberty taught by Paine, and of the deplorable policy of local terrorism pursued by the Committees of Safety against Tories and Refugees, was to produce and bring into prominence a class of active shallow men, who felt their new powers and privileges, but not the responsibility which ought to go with these. The old colonial bureaucracy, which had enjoyed all the social pre-eminence which colonial life permitted, was gone. Office was open to many who, before the war, had little chance of attaining it. They sought it eagerly, expecting to enjoy the social advantages they had formerly envied. In the Northern States a class of eager office-seekers arose who gained a great influence, saw their arena in the States especially, and jealously opposed the power of the Confederation. This class made hatred to England almost a religion, and testified to their political virtues by persecuting Tories and Refugees. They found popular grievances also ready to their hand as a means of advancement. The mass of the people had been impoverished by the war. The attempts at commercial war had reacted upon the nation with great severity. The paper issues of the Congress and the States had wrought their work-to derange values, violate contracts, inflate credit, and destroy confidence. On the return of peace the industries which had been sustained only by war ceased to be profitable; the reduction of prices spread general ruin, and left thousands indebted and impoverished. The consequence was discontent and disorder. All this was heightened by the contrast with another class which had been enriched by privateering, contracts, and "financiering." The soldier who returned in rags, bringing only a few bits of scrip worth fifteen or twenty cents on the dollar, found his family in want, and some of his neighbors, who had borne few of the sacrifices of the war, enriched by it, and now enjoying its fruits. It seemed to this whole class that they had not yet got liberty, or that they did not know what it was. They did not look for it to a closer union.

This party, for it soon became a party, found an alliance in

a quarter where it would hardly have been expected, in the slave-owning planters of the South,—an alliance which has been of immense importance in our political history. The planters, at the outbreak of the war, had been heavily indebted to English capitalists and merchants. They now feared that they would be compelled to pay their debts, and they saw in the treaty-making power of the general government the source from which this compulsion would come. They therefore opposed any union which would strengthen and give vigor to that power. To this party were added those who had adopted, on theoretical and philosophical grounds, the enthusiasm for liberty which was then prevalent in both hemispheres. It should be added to the characteristics of this party that it looked with indifference upon foreign commerce, cared little for foreign opinion, would have been glad to be isolated from the Old World, and had very crude opinions as to the status and relations of European nations.

This party naturally went on to confound liberty with equality, and to confound political virtue with tenacity of rights. It furthermore confounded power with privilege, and thought that it must allow no civil power or authority to exist, if it meant really to exterminate aristocratic privilege. It was not so clear in its conception of political duties, and certainly failed to see that the best citizen is not the one who is most tenacious of his political rights, but the one who is most faithful to his political duties; that envy and jealousy are not political virtues; and that equality can only be attained by cutting off every social advance, and making the standard, not what is highest, but what is a low average.

An opposing party gradually formed itself of men of wider information and superior training. These men understood the institutions of Great Britain and their contrast to those of any other country in Europe. They understood just what the war had done for the Colonies. They did not consider that it had altered the internal institutions inherited from the mother country, or set the Colonies adrift upon a sea of political speculation to try to find a political Utopia. Some of them joined for a time in the prevalent opinion that the Americans were better and purer than the rest of mankind, but experience soon

taught them their error. Tradition and experience still had weight with them; and, in making innovations, they sought development rather than destruction and reconstruction. They were conservative by property, education, and character.

To this party it was evident that the Colonies had lost much by falling out of the place in the family of nations which they had filled as part of the British Empire, and they believed that a similar place must now be won on an independent footing. They understood the necessity of well-regulated foreign relations, of foreign commerce, and of public credit. Their general effort was, therefore, to secure order and peace in the internal relations of the country by establishing liberty indeed, but liberty under law, and to secure respectability and respect abroad by fidelity to treaties and pecuniary engagements, by a reputation for commercial integrity, and by a development of the arts of peace. The first requisite to all this was a more perfect union.

The two parties, therefore, formed about the issue of a revision of the Articles of Confederation, but it was not until the absolute necessity of the objects aimed at by the Federalists — objects which are in their nature less directly obvious and tangible — had been demonstrated by experience, that this revision was brought about. The Union was not the result of a free and spontaneous effort, but it was “extorted from the grinding necessity of a reluctant people.” A political party which resists a proposed movement by predicting calamitous results to flow from it must abide by the verdict of history. Tried by this test, the anti-Federalists are convicted of resisting the most salutary action in our political history. The victory was won, not by writing critical essays about the movement and the relations of parties, but by the direct and energetic activity of those men of that generation who had enjoyed the greatest advantages of education and culture.

Three evils were inherited under the new Constitution from the old system: slavery (which the framers of the Constitution tolerated, thinking it on the decline), paper-money (which they thought they had eradicated), and the mercantile theories of political economy. These three evils, in their single or combined development, have given character to the

whole subsequent political history of the country. One of them has been eliminated by a civil war. The other two confront us as the great political issues of to-day.

The framers of the Constitution, without having any precise definition of a republic in mind, knew well that it differed from a democracy. No one of them was a democrat. They were, at the time of framing the Constitution, under an especial dread of democracy, on account of the rebellion in Massachusetts. They meant to make a Constitution in order to establish organized or articulated liberty, giving guaranties for it which should protect it from popular tyranny as much as from personal despotism. Indeed, they recognized the former as a great danger, the latter as a delusion. They therefore established a constitutional republic. The essential feature of such a system of government (for it is a system of government, and not a political theory) is that political power be conferred under a temporary and defeasible tenure. That it be conferred by popular election is not essential, although it is convenient in many cases. This method was the one naturally indicated by the circumstances of the United States. The system which was established did not pretend to give direct effect to public opinion according to its fluctuations. It rather interposed delays and checks in order to secure deliberation, and it aimed to give expression to public opinion only after it was matured. It sought to eliminate prejudice and passion by prescribing beforehand methods which seemed just in themselves, independently of conflicting interests, in order that, when a case arose, no advantage of procedure might be offered to either party; and it aimed to subject action to organs whose operation should be as impersonal as it is possible for the operation of political organs to be.

Democracy, on the other hand, has for its essential feature equality, and it confers power on a numerical majority of equal political units. It is not a system of government for a state with any but the narrowest limits. On a wider field it is a theory as to the depositary of sovereignty. It seizes upon majority rule, which is only a practical expedient for getting a decision where something must be done, and a unanimous judgment as to what ought to be done is impossible, and it makes

this majority the depositary of sovereignty, under the name of the sovereignty of the people. This sovereign, however, is as likely as any despot to aggrandize itself, and to promulgate the unformulated doctrines of the divine right of the sovereign majority to rule, the duty of passive obedience in the minority, and that the majority can do no wrong.

Opposition to the Federal Constitution died out in a year or two, and no one could be found who would confess that he had resisted its adoption. Parties divided on questions of detail and of interpretation, and the points on which they differed were those by which the Constitution imposed delays and restraints upon the popular will. The administrations of Washington and Adams threw continually increasing weight in favor of constitutional guaranties, as the history of the French Revolution seemed to the Federalists to furnish more and more convincing proofs of the dangers of unbridled democracy. The opposition saw nothing in that history save the extravagant ebullitions of a people new to freedom, and saw rather examples to be imitated than dangers to be shunned. Sympathy and gratitude came in to exercise a weighty influence on political issues. The personal executive and the judiciary were the chief subjects of dislike, and General Washington himself finally incurred abuse more wanton and severe than any President since has endured, except the elder Adams, because the fact was recognized that Washington's personality was the strongest bulwark which the system possessed at the outset.

Democracy, however, was, and still is, so deeply rooted in the physical and economic circumstances of the United States, that the constitutional barriers set up against it have proved feeble and vain. Fears of monarchy have now almost ceased or are ridiculed. Monarchist and aristocrat are now used only as epithets to put down some over-bold critic of our political system; but in the early days of the Republic the mass of the people believed that the supporters of the first two administrations desired aristocracy and monarchy. In a new country, however, with unlimited land, the substantial equality of the people in property, culture, and social position is inevitable. Political equality follows naturally. Democracy is given in the circumstances of the case. The yeoman farmer is the

prevailing type of the population. It is only when the pressure of population, and the development of a more complex social organization, produces actual inequality in the circumstances of individuals, that a political aristocracy can follow and grow upon a social aristocracy. The United States are far from having reached any such state as yet. These facts were felt, if not distinctly analyzed and perceived, even by those who might on theory have preferred monarchical institutions; and, as Washington said, there were not ten men in the country who wanted a monarchy.

The Federalists repaid their opponents with a no less exaggerated fear of their principles and intentions, regarding them as Jacobins and *sans culottes*, who desired to destroy whatever was good, and to produce bloodshed and anarchy. Party spirit ran to heights seldom reached since. Partisan abuse outstripped anything since. It was an additional misfortune that the questions at issue were delicate questions of foreign policy and international law. It is a great evil in a republic that parties should divide by sympathy with two foreign nations, and it is the greatest evil possible that they should not believe in each other's loyalty to the existing constitution.

The deeper movement which was stirring to affect the general attitude or standpoint in which the Constitution was viewed (a matter, of course, of the first importance under a written constitution), and which was changing the constitutional republic into a democratic republic, did not escape the observation of the most sagacious men of the earliest days. Fisher Ames wrote to Wolcott in 1800: "The fact really is, that over and above the difficulties of sustaining a free government, and the freer the more difficult, there is a want of accordance between our system and the state of our public opinion. The government is republican; opinion is essentially democratic. Either events will raise public opinion high enough to support our government, or public opinion will pull down the government to its own level." The fact was, that the government could not, under the system, long remain above the level of public opinion. The Federalists, assisted by the prestige of Washington's name, held it there for twelve years; but they never probably, on any of the party issues, had a majority of



the voters, even with a restricted suffrage. Dating the rise of parties from the time of Jay's Treaty, they had a majority of the House of Representatives only under the excitement of French insult in 1798.

The leading men of 1787 - 88, as has been said, worked industriously and energetically for political objects. The first decade of the Republic had not passed by, however, before men began to estimate the cost and sacrifices of public life and the worry of abuse and misrepresentation, to compare this with what they could accomplish in politics, and to abandon the contest. To the best public men professions and other careers offered fame, fortune, honorable and gratifying success. In public life they struggled against, and were defeated by, noisy active men, who could not have competed with them in any other profession. Their best efforts were misunderstood and misrepresented. They had no reward but the consciousness of fulfilling a high public duty. Furthermore they lacked, as a class, the tact and sagacity which the system indispensably requires. The leaders of the Federal party committed a political blunder of the first magnitude in quarrelling with John Adams, whatever may have been his faults. They thereby separated themselves from the mass of their own party, at a time when parties were so evenly balanced that they required harmony for any chance of success; and they put themselves in the position of a junto or cabal, trying to dictate to the party without guiding its reason. Those of them who had withdrawn from, or been thrown out of, political life by the causes above mentioned were most active in this work of disorganization. They had abandoned that sort of work which they had engaged in at the outset, and which, difficult as it is, is permanently incumbent on the cultured classes of the country, to make the culture of the nation homogeneous and uniform by imparting and receiving, by living in and of and for the nation, contributing to its thought and life their best stores, whatever they are. A breach was opened there which has gone on widening ever since, and which has been as harmful to our culture as to our politics. On the one side it has been left to anti-culture to control all which is indigenous and "American"; and on the other hand American culture has

been like a plant in a thin soil, given over to a sickly dilettanteism and the slavish imitation of foreign models, ill understood, copied for matters of form, and, as often as not, imitated for their worst defects.

An actual withdrawal of the ablest men from political life, such as we have come to deplore, began, then, at this early day. Many others were thrown out for too great honesty and truth in running counter to the popular notions of the day. John Adams incurred great unpopularity for having said that the English Constitution was one of the grandest achievements of the human race, — an assertion which Callender disputed, with great popular success, by dilating upon the corruption of the English administration under George III., but an assertion which no well-informed man would question, in the sense in which it was made. Sedgwick laid down the principle that the government might claim the last man as a soldier, and the last dollar in taxation, — an abstract proposition which is unquestionable, but which Callender disputed, once more with great popular success, by arguing as if it were a proposition to take the last man and the last dollar. Dexter lost a re-election by opposing a clause of the naturalization law, that a foreign nobleman should renounce his titles on being naturalized. It was opposed as idle and frivolous, and favored as if every foreign nobleman would otherwise become by naturalization a member of Congress. Hamilton and Knox abandoned the public service on account of the meagreness of their salaries. Pickering, who left office really insolvent, and with only a few hundred dollars in cash, was pursued by charges of corruption on the ground of unclosed accounts. Wolcott, at the end of long and faithful service, was charged with the responsibility for a fire which broke out in his office, as if he had sought to destroy the records of corrupt proceedings. It is no wonder that these men abandoned public life, and that their example deterred others, unless they were men born to it, who could not live out of the public arena; but it is true now, as it was then, that men of true culture, high character, and correct training can abandon public political effort only by the surrender of some of the best interests of themselves and their posterity. The pursuit of wealth, which is the natural alternative, has always ab-

sorbed far too much of the ambition of the nation, and, under such circumstances, there could be no other result than that a wealthy class should arise, to whom wealth offers no honorable social power, in whom it awakens no intellectual or political ambition, to whom it brings no sense of responsibility, but for whom it means simply the ability to buy what they want, men or measures, and to enjoy sensual luxury. A class of men is produced which mocks at the accepted notions while it uses them, and scorns the rest of us with a scorn which is so insulting only because it is so just. It is based on the fact that we will not undergo the sacrifices necessary to self-defence. This pursuit of wealth was almost the only attractive pursuit to able men who turned their backs on the public service in the early days. In later years professional careers and scientific and literary pursuits have disputed to a great and greater extent the dominion of wealth over the energies of the nation; but politics have not yet won back their due attraction for able and ambitious men.

The Federalists also held a defective political philosophy. They did not see that the strength of a constitutional republic such as they desired must be in the intelligent approval and confidence of the citizens. Adams and Hamilton agreed in supposing that some artificial bond must be constructed to give strength to the system. Hamilton looked for it in the interest of the wealthy class, which he wanted to bind up in the system, — a theory which would have changed it into a plutocracy. Adams sought the bond in ambition for social eminence, and did not see that, where such eminence sprang only from wealth or official rank, the very principle of human nature which he invoked would, under the form of envy, counteract his effort.

The Presidential election of 1801 having been thrown into the House of Representatives, the Federalists added to their former blunder another far more grave. Abandoning their claims to principle and character, they took to political intrigue and bargaining, in the attempt to elect Burr over Jefferson. Their exit from power might otherwise have been honorable, and they might, as an opposition party, have made a stand for inflexible principle and political integrity; but it was hard for them after this to talk of those things, especially as Burr went

on to develop the character which Hamilton had warned them that he possessed. They fell into the position of "independent voters," throwing their aid now with one and now with the other faction of the majority; but history does not show that they ever forced either one or the other to "adopt good measures," for the obvious reason that the majority possessed the initiative. The purchase of Louisiana seemed to them to transfer the power of the Union to the Southern and frontier States, the seat of the political theories which they regarded as reckless and lawless. They feared that the power of the Union would be used to sacrifice commerce, and to put in operation wild theories by which the interests of the Northern and Eastern States would be imperilled, and the inherited institutions of constitutional liberty, which they valued as their best possessions, would be overthrown. The Embargo and Non-intercourse Acts seemed only the fulfilment of these fears. The recourse of a minority has always been to invoke the Constitution, and to insist upon the unconstitutionality of what they could not resist by votes, each party in turn thereby bearing witness to the truth that the Constitution is the real safeguard of rights and liberty. In the last resort also the minority, if it has been local, and has seen the majority threatening to use the tremendous power of the Confederation to make the interests of the minority subservient to the interests of the rest, has felt its loyalty to the Union decline. How far the Federalists went in this direction it is difficult to say, but they certainly went further than they were afterwards willing to remember or confess. They gradually faded out of view as a political power after the second war, and, in the '20's, "Federalist" became a term of reproach.

The opposite party, called Republicans by themselves after 1792, took definite form in opposition to Washington's administration on the question of ratifying Jay's Treaty. They were first called Democrats in 1798, the name being opprobrious. They adopted it, however, first in connection with the former name; and the joint appellation, Democratic Republicans, or either separately, was used indifferently down to the middle of this century. Jefferson was the leader of this party. He did not write any political disquisitions, or aid in the attempts

which have been mentioned to form public opinion ; but his expressions in letters and fugitive writings struck in with the tide of Democracy so aptly and exactly, that he seemed to have put into people's mouths just the expression for the vague notions which they had not yet themselves been able to put into words. Jefferson, in fact, was no thinker. He was a good specimen of the apriori political philosopher. He did not reason or deduce ; he dogmatized on the widest and most rash assumptions, which were laid down as self-evident truths. He did not borrow from the contemporaneous French schools, for his democracy is of a different type ; but both sprung from the same germs, and pursued the same methods of speculation. Freneau, Bache, Calender, and Duane wrought continually upon public opinion, and Jefferson entered into the leadership of the party they created, by virtue of a certain skill in giving watchwords and dogmatic expressions for the ideas which they disseminated.

The dogmas which Jefferson taught, or of which he was the exponent, were not without truth. Their fallacy consisted in embracing much falsehood, and also in excluding the vast amount of truth which lay outside of them. For instance, the dogma that the voice of the people is the voice of God, is not without truth, if it means that the enlightened and mature judgment of mankind is the highest verdict on earth as to what is true or wise. This is the truth which is sought to be expressed in the ecclesiastical dogma of Catholicity, but the political and the ecclesiastical dogma have the same limitation. This verdict of mankind cannot be obtained in any formal and concrete expression, and is absolutely unattainable on grounds of speculation antecedent to experiment. It is in history only, or, rather, it constitutes history. In Jefferson's doctrine and practice it resolved itself simply into this practical rule: the test of wisdom for the statesman and truth for the philosopher is popularity. When the statesman has a difficult practical question before him as to what to do, according to this theory he puts forward what seems to him best as a proposition. If, then, the return wave of popular sympathy comes back to him with promptitude and with the intensity to which he is accustomed, he infers that he has proposed wisely, and goes forward. If there is delay or uncertainty in the response,

he draws back. The actual operation of this theory is, that, if the statesman in question is the idol of a popular majority, the approving response is quick and sure, because the proposition comes from him, not because the tribunal of appeal has considered, or can consider, the question. If an unpopular man endeavors to use the same test, the answer is doubtful, feeble, hesitating, or impatient, because those to whom he appeals have not the necessary preparation, or time, or interest to judge in the matter. In general, the theory is popular, because it flatters men that they can decide anything offhand, by the light of nature, or by some prompt application of assumptions as to "natural rights," or by applying the test of a popular dogma or prejudice. It tramples study and thought and culture under foot, and turns their boasts to scorn. On the other hand, it makes statesmanship impossible. Study and thought go for nothing. There can be no authority derived from information or science or training, and no leadership won by virtue of these. If the decision is to come from a popular vote, why not abandon useless trouble and trust to that alone?

Such has been the outcome in history, as will appear further on, of the doctrines which are associated with the name of Jefferson, although they really had their origin in the great social tendencies of the time, and in the circumstances of the American people. The love of philosophizing about government was a feature in the life of the second half of the eighteenth century. The method of philosophizing on assumptions was the only one employed. The Americans, with meagre experience and high purposes, readily took refuge in abstractions. The habit of pursuing two or three occupations at once destroyed respect for special or technical knowledge. There seemed to be nothing unreasonable in referring questions of jurisprudence and international law to merchants, farmers, and mechanics, for them to give an opinion as a mere incident in their regular occupations. Jefferson himself could sit down and develop out of his own consciousness a plan for fortifications and a navy for a nation, in imminent danger of war, with no more misgivings, apparently, than if he was planning an alteration on his estate.

“The further democracy was pushed, first in theory, then in practice, the more completely was the belief in the equality of all [in rights and privileges] converted, in the minds of the masses, into the belief in the equal ability of all to decide political questions of every kind. The principle of mere numbers gradually supplanted the principle of reflection and study.” This tendency reaches its climax in the popular doctrines, that every man has a right to his opinion, and that one man’s opinion is as good as another’s. We have abundant illustration of the might which it gives to “the phrase.”

It has been well said that “men can reason only from what they know,” — a doctrine which would reduce the amount of reasoning to be done by anybody to a very little. The common practice is to reason from what we do not know, which makes every man a philosopher.

Jefferson’s election was the first triumph of the tendency towards democracy, — a triumph which has never yet been reversed. The old conservatism of the former administrations died out, and it is important to observe that, from this time on, we have not the same two parties in conflict as before, but only factions or subdivisions of the one party which, under Washington and Adams, was in opposition to the administration.

The event did not justify the fears which were entertained before the election. Jefferson did not surrender any of the power of the executive. He aggrandized it as neither of his predecessors would have dared to do. He did not surrender the central power in favor of States’ rights; and his foreign policy, governed by sympathy to France and hatred to England, was only too sharp and spirited. It seldom happens to an opposition party to come into power, to have the same question proposed to it as to its predecessor, and to put its own policy to trial. This happened to Jefferson. Jay’s Treaty was hesitatingly signed by Washington, and it gave the country ten years of peace and neutrality. Pinkney and Munroe’s Treaty was rejected by Jefferson, and in six years the country was engaged in a fruitless war.

Madison’s administration revived many of the social usages which Jefferson had ostentatiously set aside, in consistency with the general spirit of preference for what is common over what

is elegant and refined, on the ground of republican simplicity. The natural tendency of the party in power to think that what is right, and that while they are comfortable other people ought to be so, was apparent here. It went on so far during Madison's first term, that the leaders thought it necessary to break the monotony, and to secure again, in some way, the readiness and activity of political life which had prevailed under Jefferson. They forced Madison into the war with England, — a war which brought disturbance into the finances, and spread distress amongst the people, which won some glory at sea only by vindicating the old Federalist policy in regard to a navy, but which was marked by disaster on land until the battle of New Orleans. At the return of peace in Europe, England was left free to deal with the United States, and a peace was hastily made in which the question of impressment, the only question at issue, was left just where it had been at the beginning.

There ensued in our internal politics an "era of good feeling." The old parties no longer had any reason to exist. Some of the Federal doctrines had been adopted. The navy was secure in its popularity. The Federal financial system had been adopted by the party in power. They had contracted a debt, laid direct taxes, and enlisted armies. When confronted by problems of war and debt, they had found no better way to deal with them than the ways which had been elaborated by the older nations, and which they had blamed the Federalists for adopting. The questions of neutrality had disappeared with the return of peace in Europe. The fears of Jacobinism on the one hand and monarchy on the other were recognized as ridiculous. If, however, any one is disposed to exaggerate the evils of party, he ought to study the history of the era of good feeling. Political issues were gone, but personal issues took their place. Personal factions sprang up around each of the prominent men who might aspire to the Presidency, and, in their struggles to advance their favorites and destroy their rivals, they introduced into politics a shameful series of calumnies and personal scandals. Every candidate had to defend himself from aspersions, from attacks based upon his official or private life. The newspapers were loaded down with controversies, letters, documents, and evi-



dence on these charges. The character of much of this matter is such as to awaken disgust and ridicule. Mr. A tells Mr. B that, when in Washington, he was present at a dinner at the house of Mr. C at which Mr. D said that he came on in the stage with Mr. E, who told him that Mr. F had seen a letter from Mr. G, a supposed friend of one candidate, to Mr. H, the friend of another candidate, making charges against the first candidate, which he (Mr. G) felt bound in honor to make known. Mr. B publishes his information, and then follow long letters from all the other gentlemen, with explanations, denials, corroborative testimony, and so on, in endless reiteration and confusion. It was another noteworthy feature of this period, that every public man seemed to stand ready to publish a “vindication” at the slightest provocation, and that in these vindications a confusion between character and reputation seemed to be universal.

These faction struggles culminated in the campaign of 1824. The first mention of General Jackson for the Presidency seems to be in a letter from Aaron Burr to his son-in-law, Alston of South Carolina, in 1815. An effort was being made to form a party against the Virginia oligarchy. Those who were engaged in it sought a candidate who might be strong enough to secure success. Burr justified his reputation as a politician by pointing out the man, but it was yet too soon. The standard of what a Federal officer ought to be was yet too high. The “Albany Argus” said of the nomination, in 1824: “He [Jackson] is respected as a gallant soldier, but he stands in the minds of the people of this State at an immeasurable distance from the executive chair.” The name of Jackson was used, however, in connection with the Presidency, by various local conventions, during 1822 and 1823; and, although the nomination was generally met with indifference or contempt in the North and East, it soon became apparent that he was the most dangerous rival in the field. The nominations had hitherto been made by caucuses of the members of Congress of either party. Until Jefferson’s second nomination, these had been held under a decent veil of secrecy. Since that time they had exerted more and more complete and recognized control. Crawford was marked for the succession, although he

was under some discipline for having allowed his name to be used in the caucus of 1816 against Munroe. The opposing candidates now discovered that caucus nominations were evil, and joined forces in a movement to put an end to them. This movement gained popular approval on general principles. When the caucus was called, naturally only the friends of Crawford attended, — sixty-six out of two hundred and sixteen Republican members. The nomination probably hurt him. It was proudly said that King Caucus was now dethroned, but never was there a greater mistake. He had only just come of age and escaped from tutelage. He was about to enter on his inheritance.

General Jackson obtained the greatest number of votes in the Electoral College ; and when the election came into the House, a claim was loudly put forward which had been feebly heard in 1801, that the House ought simply to carry out the “ will of the people,” by electing him. This claim distinctly raised the issue which has been described, of democracy against the Constitution. Does the Constitution give the election to the House in certain contingencies, or does it simply charge them with the duty of changing a plurality vote into an election ? No one had a majority, but the House was asked really to give to a major vote the authority which, even on the democratic theory, belongs to a majority.

The election could not but result in the discontent of three candidates and their adherents, but the Jackson party was by far the most discontented and most clamorous. They proceeded to organize and labor for the next campaign. They were shrewd, active men, who knew well the arena and the science of the game. They offered to Adams’s administration a ruthless and relentless opposition. There were no great party issues ; indeed, the country was going through a period of profound peace and prosperity which offered little material for history, and little occasion for active political combat. The administration was simple and business-like, and conducted the affairs of the government with that smoothness and quiet success which belong to the system in times of peace and prosperity. Mr. Adams was urged to consolidate his party by using the patronage of the executive, and the opinion has been ex-

pressed that, if he had done so, he could have won his re-election. He steadfastly refused to do this.

The truth was, that a new spirit had come over the country, and that the candidacy of Jackson was the form in which it was seeking admission into the Federal administration. Here we meet with one of the great difficulties in the study of American political history. The forces which we find in action on the Federal arena have their origin in the political struggles and personal jealousies of local politicians, now in one State and now in another; and the doctrines which are propounded at Washington, and come before us in their maturity, have really grown up in the States. Rotation in office began to be practised in New York and Pennsylvania at the beginning of the century. The Federalists then lost power in those States, and their political history consists of the struggles of factions in the Republican party. Jefferson and Madison taught Democracy in Virginia, but it never entered their heads that the “low-down whites” were really to meddle in the formative stage of politics. They expected that gentlemen planters would meet and agree upon a distribution of offices, and that the masses should have the privilege of electing the men they proposed. The Clintons and Livingstones in New York were Democrats, but they likewise understood that, in practice, they were to distribute offices around their dinner-tables.

In the mean time, men like Duane were writing essays for farmers and mechanics, which were read from one end of the Union to the other, in which they were preaching hostility to banks and the “money power,” hostility to the judiciary, and to the introduction of the common law of England, the election of judicial officers, rotation in office, and all the dogmas which we generally ascribe to a much later origin. These notions even found some practical applications, as in the political impeachment of judges in Pennsylvania in 1804, — acts which fortunately did not become precedents. The new constitutions which were adopted from time to time during the first quarter of this century show the slow working of this leaven, together with the gradual adoption of improvements far less questionable.

After 1810 also began the series of great inventions which have really opened this continent to mankind. The steam-

boat was priceless to a country which had grand rivers, but scarcely any roads. In 1817 De Witt Clinton persuaded New York to commence the Erie Canal, and before it was finished scores of others were projected or begun. Politically and financially, the system of internal improvements has proved disastrous, but those enterprises helped on the events which we are now pursuing, for they assisted in opening the resources of the continent to the reach of those who had nothing. The great mass of the population found themselves steadily gaining in property and comfort. Their independence and self-reliance expanded. They developed new traits of national character, and intensified some of the old ones. They had full confidence in their own powers, feared no difficulties, made light of experience, were ready to deal off-hand with any problems, laughed at their own mistakes, despised science and study, over-estimated the practical man, and over-esteemed material good. To such a class the doctrines of democracy seemed axiomatic, and they ascribed to democracy the benefits which accrued to them as the first-comers in a new country. They generally believed that the political system created their prosperity; and they never perceived that the very bountifulness of the new country, the simplicity of life, and the general looseness of the social organism, allowed their blunders to pass without the evil results which would follow in an older and denser community. The same causes have produced similar results ever since.

Political machinery also underwent great development during the first quarter of the century. In New York there was perhaps the greatest amount of talent and skill employed in this work, and the first engine used was the appointing power. The opposing parties were only personal and family factions, but they rigorously used power when they got it, to absorb honors and places. The conception of office arose, under which it is regarded as a favor conferred on the holder, not a position in which work is to be done for the public service. Hence the office-holder sat down to enjoy, instead of going to work to serve. If some zealous man got into office who took the latter view, he soon found that he could count upon being blamed for all which went amiss, but would get little recognition

or reward while things went well, and the safest policy was to do nothing. The public was the worst paymaster, and the most exacting and unjust employer in the country, and it got the worst service. The consequence is that the early political history of New York is little more than a story of the combinations and quarrels of factions, annual elections, and lists of changes in the office-holders. The Clintons and Livingstones united against Burr, who was the centre of an eager and active and ambitious coterie of young men, who already threatened to apply democratic doctrines with a consistency for which the aristocratic families were not prepared. Then they began to struggle with each other until the Livingstones were broken up. Then the "Martling men" and the Clintonians, the Madisonians and the Clintonians, the "Bucktails" and the Clintonians, with various subdivisions, kept up the conflict until the Constitution of 1821 altered the conditions of the fight, and Regency and Anti-regency, or Regency and People's Party, or Regency and Workingmen's Party, became the party headings. The net result of all this for national politics was the production of a class of finished "politicians," skilled in all the work of "organization," which in any wide democracy must be the first consideration. Some of these gentlemen entered the national arena in 1824. The Regency was then supporting Crawford as the regular successor. On its own terms it could have been won for Adams, but this arrangement was not brought about. On reflection, it did not require the astuteness of these men to see that Jackson was the coming man. He was in and of the rising power. He represented a newer and more rigorous application of the Jeffersonian dogmas. His manners, tastes, education, had nothing cold or aristocratic about them. He had never been trained to aim at anything high, elegant, and refined, and had not been spoiled by contact with those who had developed the art of life. He had, moreover, the great advantage of military glory. He had bullied a judge, but he had won the battle of New Orleans. He had hung a man against the verdict of a court-martial, but the man was a British emissary. It was clear that a tide was rising which would carry him into the Presidential chair, and it behoved other ambitious men to cling to his skirts and be carried up with him.

It is in and around the tariff of 1828 that the conflict centres in which these various forces were combined or neutralized to accomplish the result, and the student of our economic or political history cannot pay too close study to that crisis. For the next fifteen years the financial and political questions are inextricably interwoven.

The election of Jackson marks a new era in our political history. A new order of men appeared in the Federal administration. The whole force of local adherents of the new administration, who had worked for it and therefore had claims upon it, streamed to Washington to get their reward. It seems that Jackson was forced into the "reformation" of the government by the rapacity of this crowd. The political customs which had grown up in New York and Pennsylvania were transferred to Washington. Mr. Marcy, in a speech in the Senate, January 24, 1832, on Van Buren's nomination as minister to England, boldly stated the doctrine that to the victors belong the spoils, avowing it as a doctrine which did not seem to him to call for any delicacy on the part of politicians. In fact, to men who had grown up as Mr. Marcy had, habit in this respect must have made that doctrine seem natural and necessary to the political system. The New York politicians had developed an entire code of political morals for all branches and members of the political party machine. They had studied the passions, prejudices, and whims of bodies of men. They had built up an organization in which all the parts were adjusted to support and help one another. The subordinate officers looked up to and sustained the party leaders while carrying the party machinery into every nook and corner of the State, and the party leaders in turn cared for and protected their subordinates. Organization and discipline were insisted upon throughout the party as the first political duty, and there is scarcely a phenomenon more interesting to the social philosopher than to observe, under a political system remarkable for its looseness and lack of organization, the social bond returning and vindicating itself in the form of party tyranny, and to observe under a political system where loyalty and allegiance to the Commonwealth are only names, how loyalty and allegiance to party are intensified. It is one of the forms under which the constant

peril of the system presents itself, namely, that a part may organize to use the whole for narrow and selfish ends. The idea of the commonwealth is lost, and the public arena seems only a scrambling-ground for selfish cliques. In the especial case of the New York factions, this was all intensified by the fact that there were no dignified issues, no real questions of public policy at stake, but only factions of the ins and the outs, struggling for the spoils of office. Naturally enough, the contestants thought that to the victors belong the spoils, — otherwise the contest had no sense at all. In this system, now, fidelity to a caucus was professed and enforced. Bolting, or running against a regular nomination, were high crimes which were rarely condoned. On the other hand, the leaders professed the doctrine that a man who surrendered his claims for the good of the party, or who stood by the party, must never be allowed to suffer for it, and that a man who bolted must be punished. The same doctrines had been accepted more or less at Washington, but in a feeble and timid way. From this time they grew into firm recognition. Under their operation politics became a trade. The public officer was, of necessity, a politician, and the work by which he lived was not service in his official duty, but political party labor. The tenure of office was so insecure, and the pay so meagre, that few men could be found of suitable ability who did not think that they could earn their living more easily, pleasantly, and honorably in some other career. Public service gravitated downwards to the hands of those who, under the circumstances, were willing to take it. It presented some great prizes in the form of collectorships, etc., the remuneration for which was in glaring contrast with the salaries of some of the highest and most responsible officers in the government; but, for the most part, the public service fell into the hands of men who were exposed to the temptation to make it pay.

After the general onslaught on the caucus in 1824, it fell into disuse as a means of nominating State officers, and conventions took its place. At first sight this seemed to be a more complete fulfilment of the democratic idea. The people were to meet and act on their own motion. It soon was found, however, that the only change was in the necessity for higher organization. In the '30's there was indeed a fulfil-

ment of the theory which seems now to have passed away. There was a spontaneity and readiness in assembling and organizing common action which no longer exists. There was a public interest and activity far beyond what is now observable. One is astonished at the slight occasion on which meetings were held, high excitement developed, and energetic action inaugurated. The anti-Masonic movement, from 1826 to 1832, is a good instance. The "Liberty party" (Abolitionists), the "Native Americans," the "Anti-renters," all bear witness to a facility of association which certainly does not now exist. It is, however, an indispensable prerequisite to the pure operation of the machinery of caucus and convention. The effort to combine all good men has been talked about from the beginning, but it has always failed on account of the lack of a bond between them as strong as the bond of interest which unites the factions.

During the decade from 1830 to 1840 a whole new set of machinery was created to fit the new arrangements. This consisted in committees, caucuses, and conventions, ramifying down finally into the wards of great cities, and guided and handled by astute and experienced men. Under their control the initiative of "the people" died out. The public saw men elected whom they had never chosen, and measures adopted which they had never desired, and themselves, in short, made the sport of a system which cajoled and flattered while it cheated them. If a governor had been elected by some political trickery a little more flagrant than usual, he was very apt, in his inaugural, to draw a dark picture of the effete monarchies of the Old World, and to congratulate the people on the blessings they enjoyed in being able to choose their own rulers.

This period was full of new energy and turbulent life. Railroads were just beginning to carry on the extension of production which steamboats and canals had begun. Immigration was rapidly increasing. The application of anthracite coal to the arts was working a revolution in them. On every side reigned the greatest activity. Literature and science, which had before had but a meagre existence, were coming into life. The public journals, which had formerly been organs of per-



sons and factions, or substitutes for books, now began to be transformed into the modern newspaper. The difficulties and problems presented by all this new life were indeed great, and the tasks of government, as well to discriminate between what belonged to it and what did not, as to do what did belong to it, were great. On the general principles of the Democratic party of the day in regard to the province of government, history has already passed the verdict that they were sound and correct. On the main questions which divided the administration and the opposition, it must pass a verdict in favor of the administration. These issues were not indeed clear, and the parties did not take sides upon them definitely, as is generally supposed. Free-trade, so far as it was represented by the compromise tariff, was the result of a coalition between Clay and Calhoun against the administration, after Calhoun's quarrel with Jackson had led the latter to revoke the understanding in accordance with which Calhoun retired from the contest of 1824 and took the second place. The South was now in the position in which the Northeastern States had found themselves at the beginning of the century. The Southerners considered that the tariff of 1828 had subjected their interests to the interests of another section, which held a majority in the general government, and that the Union was being used only as a means of so subjecting them. They seized upon the Kentucky and Virginia resolutions of 1798, which Jefferson and Madison had drawn when in opposition, as furnishing them a ground of resistance, and threw into the tariff question no less a stake than civil war and disunion. On this issue there were no parties. South Carolina stood alone.

Banks had been political questions in the States and in the general government from the outset. The history of Pennsylvania and New York furnishes some great scandals under this head. The methods of banking employed had called down the condemnation of the most conservative and sensible men from time to time, and had aroused some of less well-balanced judgment to indiscriminate hostility. Jackson's attack on the Bank of the United States sprang from a political motive, and he proposed instead of it a bank on the "credit and revenues of the government," — a proposition too vague to be under-

stood, but which suggested a grand paper-machine, at a time when the Bank of the United States was at its best. This attack rallied to itself at once all the local banks, and the great victory of 1832 was not a victory for hard money so much as it was a victory of the State banks over the national bank. The removal of the deposits was a reckless financial step, and the crash of 1837 was its direct result.

The traditional position of the Democratic party on hard money has another source. In 1835 a party sprang up in New York City as a faction of Tammany, which took the name of the "Equal Rights party," but which soon received the name of the "Loco Foco party," from an incident which occurred at Tammany Hall, and which is significant of the sharpness of party tactics at the time. This party was a radical movement inside of the administration party. It claimed, and justly enough, that it had returned to the Jeffersonian fountain and drawn deeper and purer waters than the Jacksonian Democrats. It demanded equality with a new energy, and in its denunciations of monopolies and banks went very close to the rights of property. It demanded that all charters should be repealable, urgently favored a metallic currency, resisted the application of English precedents in law courts and legislatures, and desired an elective judiciary. It lasted as a separate party only five or six years, and then was cajoled out of existence by superior political tactics; but it was not without reason that the name spread to the whole party, for, laying aside certain extravagances, two or three of its chief features soon came to be adopted by the Democrats.

On the great measures of public policy, therefore, the position of the administration was not clear and thorough, but the tendency was in the right direction, especially when contrasted with the policy urged by the Whigs. In regard to internal improvements, the administration early took up a position which the result fully justified, and in its opposition to the distribution of the surplus revenue its position was unassailable. In its practical administration of the government there is less ground for satisfaction in the retrospect. Besides the general lowering of tone which has been mentioned, there were scandals and abuses which it is not necessary to specify. Gen-

eral Jackson's first cabinet fell to pieces suddenly, under the effect of a private scandal and the President's attempt to coerce the private social tastes of his cabinet, or rather of their wives. He held to the doctrine of popularity, and its natural effect upon a man of his temper, without the sobriety of training and culture, was to stimulate him to lawless self-will. He regarded himself as the chosen representative of the whole people, charged, as such, with peculiar duties over against Congress. The "will of the people" here received a new extension. He found it in himself, and what he found there he did not hesitate to set in opposition to the will of the people, as it found expression through their constitutional organs. At the same time the practice of "instructions" marked an extension, on another side, of the general tendency to bring public action closer under the control of changing majorities.

Van Buren's election was a triumph of the caucus and convention, which had now been reduced to scarcely less exactitude of action than the old congressional caucus. Van Buren, however, showed more principle than had been expected from his reputation. He had to bear all the blame of the evil fruits resulting from the mistakes made during the last eight years. Moving with the radical or locofoco tendency, he attempted to sever bank and state by the independent treasury, and in so doing he lost the support of the "Bank Democrats." This, together with the natural political revulsion after a financial crisis, lost him his re-election.

The Whig party was rich in able men, which makes it the more astonishing that one cannot find, in their political doctrines, a sound policy of government. The national bank may still be regarded as an open question, and favoring the bank was not favoring inconvertible paper-money; but their policy of high tariff for protection, internal improvements, and distribution of the surplus revenue, has been calamitous so far as it has been tried. They also present the same lack of political sagacity which we have remarked in the Federalists, whose successors in general they were. They oscillated between principle and expediency in such a way as to get the advantages of neither; and they abandoned their best men for available

men at just such times as to throw away all their advantages. The campaign of 1840 presents a pitiful story. There are features in it which are almost tragic. An opportunity for success offering, a man was chosen who had no marks of eminence and no ability for the position. His selection bears witness to an anxious search for a military hero. It resulted in finding one whose glory had to be exhumed from the doubtful tradition of a border Indian war. The campaign was marked by the introduction of mass meetings and systematic stump speaking, and by the erection of "log-cabins," which generally served as bar-rooms for the assembled crowd, so that many a man who went to a drunkard's grave twenty or thirty years ago dated his ruin from the "hard-cider campaign." After the election it proved that hungry Whigs could imitate the Democrats of 1829 in their clamor for office, and, if anything, better the instruction. The President's death was partly charged to worry and fatigue. It left Mr. Tyler President, and the question then arose what Mr. Tyler was, — a question to which the convention at Harrisburg, fatigued with the choice between Clay and Harrison, had not given much attention. It was found that he was such that the Whig victory turned to ashes. No bank was possible, no distribution was possible, and only a tariff which was lame and feeble from the Whig point of view. The cabinet resigned, leaving Mr. Webster alone at his post. In vain, like a true statesman, he urged the Whigs to rule with Mr. Tyler, since they had got him and could not get rid of him or get anybody else. Like a true statesman, again, he remained at his post, in spite of misrepresentation, until he could finish the English treaty, and it was another feature of the story that he lost position with his party by so doing. The system did not allow Mr. Webster the highest reward of a statesman, to plan and mould measures so as to impress himself on the history of his country. It allowed him only the work of reducing to a minimum the harm which other people's measures were likely to do. In the circumstances of the time war with England was imminent, and there was good reason for fear, if the negotiation should fall into the hands of the men whom Mr. Tyler was gathering about him. The Whigs were broken and discouraged, and as their discipline had always been

far looser than that of their adversaries, they seemed threatened with disintegration. The other party, however, was divided by local issues and broken into factions. Its discipline had suffered injury, and its old leaders had lost their fire, while new ones had not arisen to take their places. The Western States were growing into a size and influence in the confederation which made it impossible for two or three of the old States to control national politics any longer.

In this state of things the Southern leaders came forward to give impetus and direction to the national administration. They had, what the Southern politicians always had, leisure for conference. They had also character and social position, and a code of honor which enabled them to rely on one another without any especial bond of interest other than the general one. They had such a bond, common and complete, in their stake in slavery. They could count on support throughout their entire section without doubt or danger. They had a fixed programme also, which was an immense advantage for entering on the control of a mass of men under no especial impetus. They had also their traditional alliance with the Democrats of the North,—an alliance which always was unnatural and illogical, and which now turned to the perversion of that party. They prepared their principles, doctrines, and constitutional theories to fit their plans.

Difficulties with Mexico in regard to Texas had arisen during Jackson's administration. These difficulties seemed to be gratuitous and unjust on the part of the United States, and they seemed to be nursed by the same power. The diplomatic correspondence on this affair is not pleasant reading to one who would see his country honorable and upright, as unwilling to bully as to be bullied. Such was not the position of the United States in this matter.

It was determined by the Southern leaders to annex Texas to the United States, and to this end they seized upon the political machinery and proceeded to employ it.

The election of Polk is another of the points to which the student of American politics should give careful attention. The intrigues which surrounded it have never been more than partially laid bare, but, if fairly studied, they give deep insight

into the nature of the forces which operate in the name of the will of the people. The slavery issue was here introduced into American politics; and when that question was once raised, it "could not be settled until it was settled right." For ten years efforts were made to keep the issue out of politics, and to prevent parties from dividing upon it. What was desired was that the old parties should stand in name and organization, in order that they might be used, while the actual purposes were obtained by subordinate means. A party with an organization and discipline, and a history such as the Democratic party had in 1844, is a valuable property. It is like a well-trained and docile animal which will go through the appointed tasks at the given signal. It disturbs the discipline to introduce new watchwords and to depart from the routine, in order to use reason instead of habit. Hence the effort is to reduce the new and important issues to subordinate places, to carry them incidentally, while the old commonplaces hold together the organization. It is safe to say, however, that, in the long run, the true issues are sure to become the actual issues, and that delay and deceit only intensify the conflict.

Upon Polk's election the independent treasury and comparative free-trade were fixed in the policy of the government for fifteen years, with such beneficial results as to render them the proudest traditions of the party which adopted them.

Mr. Calhoun had abandoned the opposition during Van Buren's administration, and had begun to form and lead the Southern movement. His own mind moved too rapidly for his adherents, and he could not bring them to support him up to the positions which he considered it necessary to take; but, even as it was, the steps of the Southern programme came out with a rapidity, and were of a character, to shock the imperfectly prepared Northern allies. The Democratic party of the North was not a proslavery party. Whigs and Democrats at the North united in frowning down Abolition excitements, and in maintaining the compromises of the Constitution. Old-line Whigs and hunker Democrats agreed in the conservatism which resisted the introduction of this question; but when Van Buren was asked, as a test question to a candidate, in 1844, whether he would favor the annexation of Texas, the subject of slavery in

the Territories was thrown into the political arena from the Southern side. It was not then a question of abolishing slavery in the Southern States, which could not have obtained discussion except in irresponsible newspapers and on irresponsible platforms. It was not a question of spreading slavery into the old Territories, for Texas and the Indian Territory barred the way to all which the Missouri Compromise left open. It was now a question of taking or buying or conquering new territory for slavery, and every one knew well that the chief reason for the revolt of Texas was that Mexico had abolished slavery. The South indeed claimed to have suffered aggressions and encroachments in regard to slavery ever since the adoption of the Constitution, and the attempt was now to be made to secure recompense. In the form in which the proposition came up it was no slight shock to those who had always been in alliance with the South. Party men like Van Buren and Benton drew back. Southerners like Clay resisted. The actual clash of arms, fraudulently brought about and speciously misrepresented, put an end to discussion, and aroused a war fever under the pernicious motto, "Our country, right or wrong." If we are a free people and govern ourselves, our country is ourselves, and we have no guaranty of right and justice if we throw those standards behind us the moment we have done wrong enough to find ourselves at war. The war ended, moreover, in an acquisition of territory, which, of course, was popular; and it proved that this territory was rich in precious metals, which added to the popular estimate of it. The antecedents of the war were forgotten.

Its political results, however, were far more important. Calhoun now came forward to ward off a long conflict in regard to slavery in these Territories, by the new doctrine that the Constitution extended to all the national domain, and carried slavery with it, — a doctrine which his followers did not, for ten years afterwards, dare to take up and rigorously apply, and which divided the Democratic party of the North. The repeal of the Missouri Compromise and the enactment of the Fugitive Slave Law were only steps in the conflict which was as yet confused, but which was clearing itself for a crisis. The South, like every clamorous suitor, reckless of consequences, obtained wide concessions from an adversary who sought peace

and contentment, and who saw clearly the dangers of a struggle outside the limits of constitution and law.

The Abolitionists, from their first organization, pursued an "irreconcilable" course. They refused to vote for any slaveholder, or for any one who would vote for a slaveholder, and refused all alliances which involved any concession whatever. They more than once, by this course, aided the party most hostile to them, and, in the view of the ordinary politician, were guilty of great folly. They showed, however, what is the power of a body which has a principle and has no ambition, and is content to remain in a minority. Probably, if the South had been more moderate, the Abolitionists would have attracted little more notice than a fanatical religious sect; but, as events marched on, they came to stand as the leaders in the greatest political movement of our history. The refusal of the Whig Convention of 1848 to adopt an antislavery resolution, and the great acts above mentioned, together with the popular reaction against a party which, if it had had its way, would never have won the grand Territories on the Pacific, destroyed the Whig party. The party managers, enraged at the immense foreign element which they saw added year by year to their adversaries, forming a cohort, as it appeared, especially amenable to party discipline and the dictation of party managers, took up the Native American movement, which had had some existence ever since the great tide of immigration set in. The effort was wrecked on the obvious economic follies involved in it. How could a new country set hindrances against the immigration of labor? Politically, the effect was great in confirming the allegiance of naturalized voters, as a mass, to the Democratic party as the party which would protect their political privileges against malicious attacks. The formation of the Free-Soil party or its development into the Republican party, brought the extension of slavery into the Territories, and the extension of its influence in the administration of the government, distinctly forward as the controlling political issue.

On this issue the Democratic party, as a political organization, made up traditionally of the Southern element which has been described, of so much of the old Northern Democratic party as had not been repelled by the recent advances in



Southern demands, and of the large body of immigrants who regarded that party as the poor man's and the immigrant's friend, fell out of the place it had occupied as the representative of the great democratic tide which flows through and forms our political history. This movement has been in favor of equality. It has borne down and obliterated all the traditions and prejudices which were inherited from the Old World. It has eliminated from our history almost all recollection of the old Federal party, with its ideas of social and political leadership. It has crushed out the prestige of wealth and education in politics. It has restrained the respect and authority due to office, by narrow tenures, and by cutting away all terms of language and ceremonial observances tending to mark official rank. The Northern hatred of slavery in the later days was due more to the feeling that it was undemocratic than to the feeling that it was immoral. It was always an anomaly that the Virginians should be democrats *par excellence*, and should regard the yeomen farmers of New England as aristocrats, when, on any correct definitions or standards, the New England States were certainly the most democratic commonwealths in the world. Slavery was an obvious bar to any such classification; and when slavery became a political issue, the parties found their consistent and logical position. The rise and victory of the Republican party was only a continuation of the same grand movement for equality. The old disputes between Federalists and Jeffersonians had ended in such a complete victory for the latter, that the rising generation would have enumerated the Jeffersonian doctrines as axioms or definitions of American institutions. Every school-boy could dogmatize about natural and inalienable rights, about the conditions under which men are created, about the rights of the majority, and about liberty. The same doctrines are so held to-day by the mass of the people, and they are held so implicitly that corollaries are deduced from them with a more fearless logic than is employed upon political questions anywhere else in the world. Even scholars and philosophers who reflect upon them and doubt them are slow to express their dissent, so jealous and quick is the popular judgment of an attempt upon them. The Democratic party of the '50's was,

therefore, false to its fundamental principle of equality when it followed its alliance with the South, and allowed itself to be carried against equality for negroes. Whether there were not subtle principles of human nature at work is a question too far reaching to be followed here.

With the rise of the Republican party there came new elements into American politics. The question at stake was moral in form. It enlisted unselfish and moral and religious motives. It reached outside the proper domain of politics,—the expedient measures to be adopted for ends recognized as desirable,—and involved justice and right in regard to the ends. It enlisted, therefore, heroic elements,—sacrifice for moral good, and devotion to right in spite of expediency. At the same time, the issue was clear, simple, single, and distinct. The organization upon it was close and harmonious, not on account of party discipline, but on account of actual concord in motive and purpose. The American system was here seen in many respects at its best, and it worked more nearly up to its theoretical results in the election of Lincoln, a thoroughly representative man out of the heart of the majority, than in any other election in our history. It is probably the recollection and standard of this state of things which leads men now on the stage to believe that corruption is spreading and that the political system is degenerating. It is one of the peculiarities of the government of the United States, that it has little historical continuity. If it had more, or if people had more knowledge of their own political history, the above-mentioned opinion would find little ground. The student of history who goes back searching for the golden age does not find it.

All the heroic elements in the political issue of 1860 were, of course, intensified by the war. There was the consciousness of patriotic sacrifice in submitting to loss, bloodshed, and taxation, for an idea, for the further extension of political blessings long enjoyed and highly esteemed. After the war, national pride and consciousness of power expanded naturally, but the questions which then arose were of a different order. They were properly political questions. They concerned taxation, finance, the reconstruction of the South, the status of the freedmen. The war fervor, or the moral fervor of the political

contest could not remain at the former high pitch. There followed a natural reaction. Questions which touched the results of the war brought a quick and eager response. It would not be in human nature if that response should not be tinged by hatred of rebels and the worse passions which war arouses. For war is at best but a barbarous makeshift for deciding political questions. Let them be never so high and pure in their moral aspects, war drags them down into contact with the lowest and basest passions,—cruelty, rapacity, and revenge. Moreover, it was natural that people should want rest and quiet after the anxiety and excitement of war. Every householder desired to enjoy in peace the political system which he had defended and established by war; he did not care to renew the excitement on the political arena. The questions which arose were no longer such as could be decided by reference to a general political dogma, or a moral principle, or a text of Scripture. They were such as to perplex and baffle the wisest constitutional lawyer, or the ablest financier, or the wisest statesman. The indifference and apathy which ensued were remarkable, and they probably had still other causes. The last twenty-five years have seen immense additions to the number and variety of subjects which claim a share of the interest and attention of intelligent men. Literature has taken an entirely new extension and form. Newspapers bring daily information of the political and social events of a half-dozen civilized countries. New sciences appeal to the interest of the entire community. Educational, ecclesiastical, sanitary, and economic undertakings, in which the public welfare is involved, demand a part of the time and effort of every citizen. At the same time, trade and industry have undergone such changes in form and method that success in them demands far closer and more exclusive application than formerly. The social organization is becoming more complex, the division of labor is necessarily more refined, and the value of expert ability is rapidly rising.

It follows from all this that, while public interests are becoming broader and weightier, the ability of the average voter to cope with them is declining. It is no wonder that we have not the political activity of the first half of this century. In-

stead of grasping at the right to a share in deciding, we shrink from the responsibility. We are more inclined to do here what we should do in any other affair, — seek for competently trained hands into which to commit the charge. The frequent elections, instead of affording a pleasurable interest to the ordinary voter, appear to be tiresome interruptions. What he wants is good government, honorable and efficient administration, business-like permanence, and exactitude. He recognizes in the short terms and continual elections, not an opportunity for him to control the government, but an opportunity for professional hangers-on of parties to make a living, and a continually recurring opportunity for schemers of various grades to enter and carry out their plans when people are too busy to watch them. The opinion seems to be gaining ground that, for fear of power, we have eliminated both efficiency and responsibility; that if power is united with responsibility, it will be timid and reluctant enough; and that the voter needs only reserve the right of supervision and interference from time to time. The later State constitutions show a reaction from those of the first half of the century in the length of terms of office, and in the general tendency of the people to take guaranties against themselves or their representatives. There seems also to be a tendency to investigate the theory of appointments or elections to office as a means of devising more satisfactory means to that end. No system will ever give a self-governing people a government which is better than they can appreciate; but the very belief, to which we have before referred, that the government is degenerating, is the best proof that the public standards as to the *personnel* and the methods of the government are rising. It seems to be perceived that the plan of popular selection is applicable to executive and legislative officers, but that it is not applicable to the judiciary or to administrative officers. In the one case, broad questions of policy control the choice; in the other case, personal qualifications and technical training, in regard to which the mass of voters cannot be informed and cannot judge. In some quarters, an unfortunate effort has been made to charge the duty of making certain appointments upon the judges, because, as a class, they retain the greatest popular confidence, and the restraints

of their position are the weightiest. This, however, seems to be using up our last reserves. There has been abundant criticism of political movements and circumstances of late years. At first sight, it does not appear to be very fruitful. People seem to pay as little heed to it as devout Catholics do to the asserted corruptions of the Church; but other and deeper signs point to a conservative movement, slow, as all popular movements must be, but nevertheless real.

The political party system which had been developed previous to the war underwent no change during the heroic period. The doctrines of spoils and of rotation in office were indeed condemned, but it appeared (as it must appear to any new party coming into office) that the interests at stake were too great to be risked by leaving any part of the administration in the hands of disaffected men, and, with some apologies, the changes were made. It is the fate of the party in power to draw to itself all the unprincipled men who seek to live by politics, and to lose its principled adherents as, on one question after another, they disapprove of its action. The moral and heroic doctrines or sentiments of the Republican party were just the political principles which offered the best chance to the unprincipled. A man of corrupt character could "hate slavery" when that was the line of popularity and success, and could be "loyal" when only loyal men could get offices. The political machinery whose growth has been traced was adopted by the new party as a practical necessity, and the men "inside politics" still teach the old code wrought out by Tammany Hall and the Albany Regency, not only as the only rules of success for the ambitious politician, but also as the only sound theories on which the Republic can be governed. In those quarters where hitherto the refinements of the system have all been invented, a new and ominous development has recently appeared in the shape of the "Boss." He is the last and perfect flower of the long development at which hundreds of skilful and crafty men have labored, and into which the American people have put by far the greatest part of their political energy. It has been observed that the discipline or coercion which we dread for national purposes and under constitutional forms appears with the vigor of a military depotism

in party; and that the conception of loyalty, for which we can find no proper object in our system, is fully developed in the party. Under this last development, also, we find leadership, aristocratic authority of the ablest, nay, even the monarchical control of the party king. He is a dictator out of office. He has power, without the annoyance or restraints of office. He is the product of a long process of natural selection. He has arisen from the ranks, has been tried by various tests, has been trained in subordinate positions, and has come up by steady promotions, — all the processes which, when we try to get them into the public service, we are told are visionary and aristocratic. With the now elaborate system of committees rising in a hierarchy from the ward to the nation, with the elaborate system of primaries, nominating committees, caucuses, and conventions, not one citizen in a thousand could tell the process by which a city clerk is elected. It becomes a special trade to watch over and manage these things, and the power which rules is not the “will of the people,” but the address with which “slates” are made up. Organization is the secret by which the branches of the political machinery are manipulated, when they are not, by various devices, reduced, as in the larger cities, to mere forms. In these cases the ring and the “Boss” are the natural outcome. Any one who gets control of the machine can run it to produce what he desires, with the exception, perhaps, that, if he should try to make it produce good, he might find that this involved a reverse action of the entire mechanism, under which it would break to pieces. These developments are as yet local, for the plunder of a great city is a prize not to be abandoned for any temptation which the general government can offer. In some cases they are hostile to the power of the Federal office-holders where that is greatest and most dangerous, so that they neutralize each other. At the same time some of the Federal legislation in the way of “protection” and subsidies offers high inducements and abundant opportunities for debauching the public service. There are means of rewarding adherents, distributing largess, collecting campaign funds, performing favors, afforded by the system in great abundance; and it tends to bind men together in cliques up and down through the service, on the basis of mu-

tual assistance and support and protection. Suppose that the ring and the “Boss” should ever be ingrafted upon this system!

It cannot be regarded as a healthful sign that such a state of things creates only a laugh, or a groan of disgust, or at best a critical essay. It seems sometimes as if the prophecy of Calhoun had turned into history: “When it comes to be once understood that politics is a game, that those who are engaged in it but act a part, and that they make this or that profession, not from honest conviction or an intent to fulfil them, but as a means of deluding the people, and, through that delusion, acquiring power,—when such professions are to be entirely forgotten, the people will lose all confidence in public men. All will be regarded as mere jugglers, the honest and patriotic as well as the cunning and profligate, and the people will become indifferent and passive to the grossest abuses of power, on the ground that those whom they may elevate, under whatever pledges, instead of reforming, will but imitate the example of those whom they have expelled.”

In the final extension of the conception of the “will of the people,” and of the position of Congress in relation to it, Congress has come to be timid and faltering in the face of difficult tasks. It knows how to go when the people have spoken, and not otherwise. The politician gets his opinions from the elections, and the legislature wants to be pushed, even in reference to matters which demand promptitude and energy. Statesmanship has no positive field, and has greatly declined. The number of able men who formerly gave their services to mould, correct, and hinder legislation, and upon whom the responsibility for leading on doubtful and difficult measures could be thrown, has greatly decreased. The absence of “leaders” has often been noticed. The fact seems to be that able men have observed that such statesmen as have been described bore the brunt of the hard work, and were held responsible for what they had done their best to hinder; that they cherished a vain hope and ambition their whole lives long, and saw inferior men without talent or industry preferred before them. It is a sad thing to observe the tone adopted towards a mere member of Congress as such. When one reflects that he is a member of the grand legislature of the nation, it is no gratifying sign of

the times that he should be regarded without respect, that a slur upon his honor should be met as presumptively just, and that boys should turn flippant jests upon the office, as if it involved a dubious reputation. If the Republic possesses the power to meet and conquer its own tasks, it cannot too soon take measures to secure a representative body which shall respect itself and be respected, without doubt or question, both at home and abroad; for the times have changed and the questions have changed, and we can no longer afford to govern ourselves by means of the small men. The interests are now too vast and complex, and the greatest question now impending, the currency, contains too vast possibilities of mischief to this entire generation to be left the sport of incompetent men. The democratic Republic exults in the fact that it has conducted a great civil war to a successful result, against the expectations of its enemies. A far heavier strain on democratic-republican self-government lies in the questions now impending,— can we ward off subsidy-schemers? can we correct administrative abuses? can we purify the machinery of elections? can we revise erroneous financial systems and construct sound ones? The war appealed to the simplest and commonest instincts of human nature, especially as human nature is developed under democratic institutions. The questions before us demand for their solution high intellectual power and training, great moderation and self-control, and perhaps no less disposition to endure sacrifices than the war itself.

Such a review as has here been given of the century of American politics must raise the questions, whether the course has been upward or downward, and whether the experiment is a success or not. On such questions opinions might fairly differ, and I prefer to express upon them only an individual opinion.

The Federal political system, such as it is historically in the intention and act of its framers, seems to me open to no objection whatever, and to be the only one consistent with the circumstances of the case. I have pursued here a severe and exact criticism of its history, as the only course consistent with the task before me, and the picture may seem dark and ungrati-



ying. I know of no political history which, if treated in the same unsparing way, would appear much better. I find nothing in our history to throw doubt upon the feasibility and practical advantage of a constitutional Republic. That system, however, assumes and imperatively requires high intelligence, great political sense, self-sacrificing activity, moderation, and self-control on the part of the citizens. It is emphatically a system for sober-minded men. It demands that manliness and breadth of view which consider all the factors in a question, submit to no sophistry, never cling to a detail, or an objection, or a side issue to the loss of the main point, and, above all, which can measure a present advantage against a future loss, and individual interest against the common good. These requirements need only be mentioned to show that they are so high that it is no wonder we should have fallen short of them in our history. The task of history is to show us wherein and why, so that we may do better in future.

If the above sketch of our political history has been presented with any success, it shows the judgment which has been impressed upon my mind by the study of it, namely, that the tenor of the Constitution has undergone a steady remoulding in history in the direction of democracy. If a written constitution were hedged about by all the interpretations conceivable, until it were as large as the Talmud, it could not be protected from the historical process which makes it a different thing to one generation from what it is to another, according to the uses and needs of each. I have mentioned the forces which seem to me to produce democracy here. They are material and physical, and there is no fighting against them. It is, however, in my judgment, a corruption of democracy to set up the dogma that all men are equally competent to give judgment on political questions; and it is a still worse perversion of it to adopt the practical rule that they must be called upon to exercise this ability on all questions as the regular process for getting those questions solved. The dogma is false, and the practical rule is absurd. Caucus and wire-pulling and all the other abuses are only parasites which grow upon these errors.

Reform does not seem to me to lie in restricting the suffrage or in other arbitrary measures of a revolutionary nature.

They are impossible, if they were desirable. Experience is the only teacher whose authority is admitted in this school, and I look to experience to teach us all, that the power of election must be used to select competent men to deal with questions, and not to indirectly decide the questions themselves. I expect that this experience will be very painful, and I expect it very soon.

On the question whether we are degenerating or not, I have already suggested my opinion that we are not degenerating. The lamentations on that subject have never been silent. It seems to me that, taking the whole community through, the tone is rising and the standard is advancing, and that this is one great reason why the system seems to be degenerating. Existing legislation nourishes and produces some startling scandals, which have great effect on people's minds. The same legislation has demoralized the people, and perverted their ideas of the functions of government even in the details of town and ward interests. The political machinery also has been refined and perfected until it totally defeats the popular will, and has produced a kind of despair in regard to any effort to recover that of which the people have been robbed; but I think that it would be a great mistake to suppose that there are not, behind all this, quite as high political standards and as sound a public will as ever before. An obvious distinction must be made here between the administration of the government, or the methods of party politics, and the general political morale of the people. Great scandals are quickly forgotten, and there are only too many of them throughout our history. Party methods have certainly become worse and worse. The public service has certainly deteriorated; but I should judge that the political will of the nation never was purer than it is to-day. That will needs instruction and guidance. It is instructed only slowly and by great effort, especially through literary efforts, because it has learned distrust. It lacks organization, and its efforts are spasmodic and clumsy. The proofs of its existence are not very definite or specific, and any one in expressing a judgment must be influenced by the circle with which he is most familiar; but there are some public signs of it, which are the best encouragement we have to-day.

W. G. SUMNER.